REMARKS

Claims 1-39 were originally pending in the application. Claims 29-38 have been withdrawn from consideration resulting from applicants' election to prosecute Claims 1-28 and 39 in this application. That election is hereby confirmed. Claims 29-38 have been canceled subject to filing a divisional application directed thereto.

The rejection of Claims 8-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite is respectfully traversed. Claims 8-28 have been amended to obviate the Examiner's rejection. More particularly, the phrase "caused to" has been deleted from Claim 8. Claim 1 has been amended to refer to dried pulp fiber. The reference to knot count in the remaining claims is with respect to those dried pulp fibers. Similar amendments have been made to Claims 17-25 to obviate the rejection with regard to the references to fines and accepts. Finally, Claim 28 has been amended by deletion of the phrase "less than."

The rejection of Claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Westland et al., Graef et al., Wu et al., Naieni et al. in view of Marsh and Crowther et al. is respectfully traversed. The Examiner is respectfully requested to note that Claim 1, the only independent claim in the application, has been amended and is now directed to a process for producing crosslinked singulated pulp fibers comprising the steps of (a) introducing a *never-dried* wet pulp *that has not been subjected to mechanical defibering* and air into a jet drier, (b) treating the wet pulp with a crosslinker, (c) thereafter drying the pulp in the jet drier to form singulated pulp fibers, and removing the pulp from the jet drier and separating the dried pulp fibers from the air in said jet drier. Specifically, the process is directed to *never-dried* wet pulp *that has not been subjected to mechanical defibering.*

The Examiner will note that the four primary references operate on pulp that has been once dried. The pulp is reconstituted and a crosslinker applied. Thereafter, the pulp is defiberized with a mechanical device and is introduced into a flash drier. Thus, all of the

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primary references require previously dried pulp and also require mechanical defibering to achieve the stated results of low knot content. Applicants achieve their results with a *never-dried* wet pulp *that does not require mechanical defibering* and yet yields a crosslinked pulp having low knots, fines and accepts. There is no suggestion in any of the primary references that applicants' results can be achieved without mechanical defibering on a never-dried pulp. Because the principal references do not disclose or suggest the invention now defined in applicants' Claim 1, the secondary references add nothing.

Accordingly, the Examiner has failed to set forth a *prima facie* case of obviousness based on the references of record. Applicants have clearly set forth the differences between their claimed invention and the disclosures of the prior art. The claims now clearly define a patentable invention under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over that prior art. The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to reexamine the application, to reconsider and withdraw the rejections of the claims under Section 112 and Section 103(a), and to promptly allow the case and pass it to issue.

If the Examiner has any further questions, he is invited to call applicants' attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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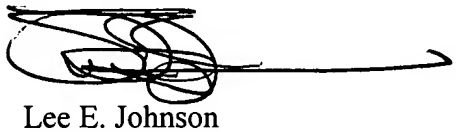

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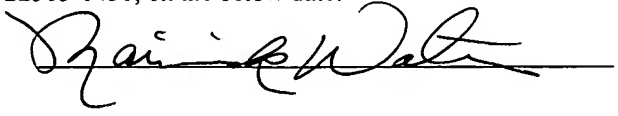

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